



Project Update

I-90 Corridor Roadside Facilities Study La Crosse and Monroe Counties

Greetings from the I-90 study team. This article is to update interested persons on the I-90 Corridor Facilities Study being conducted by The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and their consultant, CH2M HILL. The study corridor extends from La Crosse to Tomah and the existing facilities include the French Island Welcome Center, the truck safety and weight enforcement facility near West Salem, the eastbound Bangor rest area and the Sparta westbound rest area.

The study will provide a long-range plan for modern roadside facilities that serve the traveling public and trucking industry, enhance freeway operations and safety, and that are compatible with local land use plans. The alternatives include upgrading facilities at their present locations and developing new facilities at new locations. A key feature will be a modern safety and weight enforcement facility (SWEF) to expedite truck weighing/inspection and improve safety by eliminating backups on the I-90 ramps. The study will conclude in spring 2006 with a recommended improvement plan. The project will then proceed to final design and land acquisition. Construction of the first facility is targeted for 2009.

In February 2005, a meeting was held with the project's advisory committee to review the study scope and to report on data gathering that included information on the existing facilities, truck survey results, auto and truck parking use/needs and preliminary traffic forecasts on I-90. Advisory committee members include local officials and representatives from the Department of Tourism, Rehabilitation for Wisconsin, State Patrol, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Motor Carriers Association, and the Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association. The first public information meeting was held on February 16, 2005, (Onalaska) and February 17 (Sparta). Approximately 20 people attended the sessions to find out about the study, provide comments on the existing facilities, and to share ideas on ways to improve the existing facilities or possible new locations.

Based on input from the February meetings and continued coordination with state and federal review agencies, the study team has been working on a range of alternatives and screening criteria such as engineering and environmental constraints, present and future land use and real estate needs. At this time the following preliminary alternatives are being considered:

- Keep the French Island Travel Information Center at its present location with possible layout changes to improve access, parking, and aesthetic features including a building that would overlook the Mississippi River channel.
- Keep the westbound Sparta rest area at its present location with enhancements to meet current design standards.
- Move the SWEF to a new location that has sufficient length and sight distance along I-90 for a high speed weigh-in-motion system and more room for a modern truck inspection building. The existing Bangor eastbound rest area and other new locations are being evaluated.
- Keep the eastbound Bangor rest area at its present location, eliminate this facility, or move it to a new location.

During the next couple of months, the alternatives will continue to be evaluated and refined. This will involve additional field surveys for wetlands, potential threatened or endangered species habitat, archaeological sites and other environmental/land use constraints. Cooperation in allowing study team members to access private land where needed to conduct the studies will be greatly appreciated.

The next project advisory committee meeting and public information meeting will be held later this summer. The public information meeting will be announced in local newspapers and through a newsletter to persons on the project's mailing list.

If you have any questions or comments about the information in this article or about the study, you may contact one of the following study team members:

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